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ABSTRACT

One of the goals of the West Virginia Task Force on Children, Youth and Families is to build a constituency for children. Two critical factors in building a constituency for children are a shared vision and influential leaders. The four principles used by the Task Force for building a constituency are: (1) defining a regional target for organizing in the private sector; (2) promoting models for programs that work; (3) using a membership concept in which there is no fee to join, and each member becomes a regional advisor; and (4) conducting fact-finding and sharing information. Building a constituency for children in rural West Virginia must consider limited resources, geographic isolation, and physician shortages. Other challenges include differing needs of each member of the coalition and of different regions. Risk factors for children are poverty, health problems of early childhood, and abuse and neglect. Examples of programs that will help overcome the risk factors are Headstart, Women Infants and Children (WIC), and Family Planning. Some of the reasons society does not do what is right for children are demands of special interests, greed, power, and lack of knowledge. There is a growing recognition that it is in everyone's self-interest to do something. The public recognizes that children must be protected from poverty and other abuses because when they are not, society will one day have to be protected from them. (KS)

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FIFTH ANNUAL UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY
CONFERENCE ON APPALACHIA
KEYNOTE ADDRESS
November 6, 1990
Lexington, Kentucky

BUILDING A CONSTITUENCY FOR CHILDREN

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THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME.

WE ALL KNOW THERE ARE A LOT OF THINGS THAT NEED TO BE DONE TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF CHILDREN. WE HAVE A PUBLIC CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM IN THIS COUNTRY IN CHAOS; IT IS ALMOST UNMANAGEABLE AND DOING BADLY FOR CHILDREN. THE TRADITIONAL APPROACHES WON'T WORK. FOR INSTANCE, MORE COORDINATION AND MORE IN-SERVICE TRAINING ARE NOT GOING TO SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVE THINGS FOR CHILDREN.

WE NEED TO IMPLEMENT NEW PRINCIPALS OF SERVICE DELIVERY. WE NEED A SERVICE SYSTEM DESIGNED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF FAMILIES RATHER THAN NEEDS OF OUR FUNDING SOURCES. THIS WILL COME ABOUT ONLY WHEN WE ARE ABLE TO LOCALLY PUT ALL THE SERVICE MONEY ON THE TABLE, FOR THE FAMILY, FORGETTING THE CATEGORIES OF FUNDING.

NO MATTER WHAT WE DO, DO AWAY WITH THE WHOLE SYSTEM OR CREATE NEW PROGRAMS AND EXPAND OLD ONES, WE WILL NEED MORE MONEY... ABOUT 85 BILLION A YEAR ACCORDING TO THE CENTER FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE.. AND

WE NEED TO BUILD A CONSTITUENCY FOR CHILDREN. BUILDING THIS CONSTITUENCY IS ONE OF THE GOALS OF THE WEST VIRGINIA TASK FORCE ON CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES.

WE ARE A STATEWIDE, NON-PROFIT PUBLIC INTEREST ORGANIZATION ADVOCATING FOR CHILDREN. WE ARE A NON-PARTISAN PARTNER WITH GOVERNMENT. OUR MISSION IS TO IMPROVE CHILDREN'S LIVES BY MOBILIZING BOTH THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTORS.

WE BELIEVE THAT THE KEY TO WINNING BIG FOR CHILDREN IS IDENTIFYING NEW CONVERTS AND NEW ALLIES FOR CHILDREN.

WE KNOW THAT CHILDREN ARE POWERLESS. CHILDREN DON'T VOTE. CHILDREN ARE NOT DIRECTLY ASKING FOR ANYTHING. SO THE NEED FOR A COALITION TO SPEAK FOR CHILDREN IS CLEAR.

SO, HOW DO WE DO THIS?

WELL, YOU GUESSED IT:

THERE IS NO MODEL IN LITERATURE ABOUT BUILDING A CONSTITUENCY FOR CHILDREN.

THERE IS NO GENERAL CONSTITUENCY FOR CHILDREN IN WEST VIRGINIA OR THE NATION. WE HAVE SPECIAL INTEREST CONSTITUENCIES LIKE NAEYC, CWLA AND CDF.

THERE IS NO ONE MODEL IN PRACTICE TO FOLLOW.

WE ARE FOLLOWING SOME PRINCIPALS, HOWEVER. I WILL SHARE FOUR OF THESE ALONG WITH TWO CRITICAL FACTORS WHICH I BELIEVE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR CURRENT SUCCESS. I WILL ALSO NOTE SOME RURAL CONSIDERATIONS AND SOME SPECIAL CHALLENGES.

BEFORE I MOVE TO THE FOUR ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES, I WANT TO MAKE A FEW MORE COMMENTS ABOUT THE CASE FOR BUILDING A CONSTITUENCY..

THE PROBLEMS FACING CHILDREN ARE ENORMOUS. WE ALL KNOW THIS. I

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WON'T SHARE A LOT OF STATISTICS. THE PROBLEMS ARE ENORMOUS IN THE WORLD. THE PROBLEMS ARE ENORMOUS IN THE UNITED STATES, THE PROBLEMS IN THIS FIVE STATE CENTRAL APPALACHIAN REGION ARE ENORMOUS. WE HAVE LARGE PERCENTAGES OF CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY, TWENTY-THREE PERCENT ON THE AVERAGE.

THE PROBLEMS FOR CHILDREN IN KENTUCKY AND IN MY STATE, WEST VIRGINIA, ARE ENORMOUS. FOR EXAMPLE, KENTUCKY RANKS 48th IN THE NATION IN THE PERCENT OF BIRTHS TO TEENS. IN WEST VIRGINIA, HALF OF THE BABIES BORN ARE BORN INTO POVERTY.

WE KNOW THAT OUR CAUSE IS JUST, BUT JUSTICE ALONE IS NOT WINNING THE PUBLIC SUPPORT THAT IS NEEDED. MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN SAID, "JUSTICE IS NOT CHEAP AND JUSTICE IS NOT QUICK AND JUSTICE IS NOT EVER FINALLY ACHIEVED." THE LESSON FOR US IS THAT CHANGE FOR CHILDREN IS HARD AND SLOW AND THEREFORE IN CONSTANT NEED OF NEW LEADERS AND NEW ALLIES.

I HAVE BEEN WORKING IN SOCIAL SERVICES FOR TWENTY TWO YEARS. MY WORK BEGAN DURING A TIME OF GREAT HOPE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE, THE SIXTIES.

THE NINETIES HAVE BROUGHT MANY STEPS BACKWARDS. FOR EXAMPLE:

THE GAP BETWEEN THE RICH AND THE POOR HAS NEVER BEEN GREATER SINCE WORLD WAR II. THERE NEVER WAS A TRICKLE FROM THE TRICKLE DOWN.

WHEN MEDICAID BEGAN IN THE 60's, 60% OF THE POOR WERE BEING SERVED. IN 1989, ONLY 28% OF POOR ARE COVERED.

31.5% OF OUR WORK FORCE EARN POVERTY LEVEL WAGES.

THE LOSS IN FUNDING FOR CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS HAS BEEN ENORMOUS. IN WEST VIRGINIA WE LOST OVER 800 MILLION IN FEDERAL FUNDS IN THE LAST TEN YEARS.

I NOTICE OTHER CHANGES, HOWEVER, THAT GIVE US HOPE.

ONE, PUBLIC ATTITUDES ARE CHANGING. FOR EXAMPLE:

BUSINESS IS CONCERNED ABOUT ITS FUTURE WORK FORCE.

POLICY MAKERS AGENDA IS CHANGING. FOR EXAMPLE, WE HAVE EXPANSION OF MEDICAID FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN. WHILE EXPANSION OF MEDICAID IS WELL INTENTIONED, I THINK IT IS A LIE. WE ARE JUST MAKING MORE PEOPLE ELIGIBLE FOR SOMETHING THEY CANNOT GET. WE WILL USE NEXT TEN YEARS TO SEE HOW WE CAN PREVENT POOR MOTHERS FROM QUALIFYING. THE ONLY SOLUTION TO HEALTH CARE IS A ONE TRACK (FOR RICH AND POOR) HEALTH INSURANCE SYSTEM. AS LONG AS WE HAVE ONE SYSTEM FOR THE POOR AND ONE FOR THE REST OF US, WE ARE GOING TO HAVE A POOR HEALTH SYSTEM FOR THE POOR.

SO, PUBLIC ATTITUDES ARE CHANGING REGARDLESS OF REASONS. THERE IS A MOMENTUM FOR REFORM.

TWO, THE SECOND CHANGE WHICH GIVES US HOPE IS A MOVE AWAY FROM CENTRALIZED REFORM (AS EXEMPLIFIED BY STATE LAWS WHICH PRESCRIBE TEACHER HIRING PRACTICES) TO A FOCUS ON COMMUNITY CONTROL AND GRASSROOTS REFORM. THERE IS A RECOGNITION THAT IT IS SMALL NUMBERS AND SMALL ACTS IN COMMUNITIES WHICH CAUSE REFORM. THIS IS REFLECTED IN OUR EMERGING STATE POLICIES AND PHILOSOPHY STATEMENTS FOR CHILDREN, AND IN THE KINDS OF WORKSHOPS WE HAVE AT NATIONAL CONFERENCES, LIKE WORKSHOPS AT THIS CONFERENCE, SUCH AS PARENT AND CHILD CENTERS AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN RURAL SCHOOLS. KENTUCKY'S NEW EDUCATIONAL REFORM IS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF A FOCUS ON COMMUNITY CONTROL. IT'S IMPORTANT, BY THE WAY, THAT WE NOT DUMP NEW RESPONSIBILITIES ON COMMUNITIES WITHOUT PREPARATION.

WE ALL UNDERSTAND THE POWER OF SMALL THINGS WHICH ACHIEVE GREAT ENDS WHEN THERE IS FAITH. THE IMAGES FROM THE BIBLE ARE THE SLINGSHOT AND THE MUSTARD SEED. THE IMAGES FROM MODERN LITERATURE INCLUDE PAUL AND SPENCER FROM ROBERT PARKER'S BOOK, EARLY AUTUMN.

EARLY AUTUMN TELLS THE STORY OF SPENCER'S ADOPTION OF PAUL, THE CHILD NO ONE WANTED.. SPENCER'S ADOPTION OF PAUL WAS A SMALL INDIVIDUAL ACT, BUT IT TRANSFORMED PAUL'S LIFE. SPENCER TAUGHT PAUL HOW TO FISH.

SMALL ACTS THAT ARE TRANSFORMING CHILDREN'S LIVES IN KENTUCKY, INCLUDE THE WORK OF JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE OF LOUISVILLE AS THEY RESETTLE RUSSIAN JEWS. I VISITED THEIR PROGRAM SEVERAL MONTHS AGO.

IN WEST VIRGINIA THERE ARE NUMEROUS SMALL ACTS. ONE EXAMPLE IS THE WORK OF THE MATEWAN NATIONAL BANK. THEY HAVE ADOPTED A LOCAL HEADSTART PROGRAM.

SO, THIS IS OUR CASE FOR BUILDING A CONSTITUENCY FOR CHILDREN:

(1) TIME IS RIGHT. THERE IS MOMENTUM TO BE SEIZED;

AND (2) CHANGE IS HARD AND SLOW; AND THEREFORE, WE CONSTANTLY NEED NEW LEADERS AND NEW ALLIES.

FOUR PRINCIPLES TO BUILDING A CONSTITUENCY. THE FOUR PRINCIPLES I WILL SHARE NEED TO BE PREFACED WITH TWO VERY CRITICAL FACTORS.

I BELIEVE THE TWO MOST CRITICAL FACTORS IN THE TASK FORCE'S CURRENT AND FUTURE SUCCESS ARE:

(1) WE HAVE A SHARED VISION FOR CHILDREN. THIS EXISTS NATIONALLY AND IN WEST VIRGINIA AMONG CHILD ADVOCATES PARTICULARLY. THIS VISION IS EXTENDING TO OTHER SECTORS INCLUDING THE BUSINESS AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES. AND TWO,

(2) THE TASK FORCE HAS A BOARD OF DIRECTORS COMPOSED OF SOME OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL AND COMMITTED PRIVATE SECTOR LEADERS IN THE STATE.

LET ME TALK ABOUT SHARED VISION A BIT AND THEN I'LL TALK ABOUT OUR BOARD.

THE SHARED VISION HAS COME ABOUT BECAUSE OF YOUR EFFORTS..THE BUSINESS INTEREST, THE PUBLIC POLICY MAKERS INTEREST, THE CONSENSUS ABOUT WHAT WE NEED TO DO, HAS COME ABOUT BECAUSE OF WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN DOING. THE FACT THAT:

(1) BUSINESS IS THINKING DIFFERENTLY, AND THAT

(2) POLICY MAKERS ARE EXPANDING MEDICAID

IS NOT AN ACCIDENT.

IT IS YOUR WORK BEGUN TEN AND FIFTEEN YEARS AGO AND IT IS PAYING OFF...

SO WE HAVE A SHARED VISION. I BELIEVE WE ARE AT THE END OF AN ADVOCACY ERA. WE HAVE ACHIEVED THIS SHARED VISION, OUR NEXT MOVE IS TO HAVE A SHARED STRATEGY, BUT THAT IS ANOTHER PRESENTATION.

OUR INFLUENTIAL AND COMMITTED BOARD IS THE RESULT OF THE COMMITMENT OF A FEW PEOPLE, THE GOVERNOR AND THE FIRST LADY AND A RETIRED COAL MINE OWNER, LAWSON HAMILTON. THEY CREATED THE TASK FORCE, AND THEY APPOINTED OTHER INFLUENTIAL LEADERS IN THE STATE FROM BUSINESS, LABOR AND THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY. THEY THEN APPOINTED AN ADVISORY GROUP FROM THE SOCIAL SERVICE SECTOR. THE TASK FORCE MEMBERS WENT THROUGHOUT THE STATE VISITING CHILDREN, PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITIES. OUT OF THESE VISITS THEY CAME TO AGREE ON A VISION FOR CHILDREN. OUR FIRST REPORT DOCUMENTED THIS VISION AND WAS PUBLISHED IN SEPTEMBER, 1989 (A REPORT FROM THE GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE ON CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES). AFTER THIS, WE DECIDED TO BECOME INDEPENDENT, WE INCORPORATED AS A NON-PROFIT, PUBLIC INTEREST ORGANIZATION IN 1990 IN ORDER TO SUPPORT THE REFORMS WE HAD RECOMMENDED.

INTERESTINGLY, THE TASK FORCE MODEL IS THE SAME MODEL BEING USED BY SENATOR ROCKEFELLER'S NATIONAL COMMISSION ON CHILDREN. NATIONAL COMMISSION LEADERS HAVE VISITED CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND PROGRAMS THROUGH THE UNITED STATES. THEY ARE NOW WORKING TO AGREE ON A STRATEGY. THEIR REPORT DUE IN MARCH. SO THESE ARE THE TWO CRITICAL

FACTORS: (1) SHARED VISION; AND (2) INFLUENTIAL LEADERS.

NOW, LET'S DISCUSS THE FOUR PRINCIPLES FOR BUILDING A CONSTITUENCY.

1. WE HAVE DEFINED OUR TARGET FOR ORGANIZING. IN GENERAL, IT IS A REGIONAL APPROACH AND IT IS THE PRIVATE SECTOR. SPECIFICALLY, IT IS BUSINESS, THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY, LABOR AND THE SOCIAL SERVICE SECTOR.

WE REALIZE THAT IN THIS COALITION BUILDING WE MAY NOT AGREE ON ALL MATTERS, BUT WE DO SHARE THE SAME VISION FOR CHILDREN. I HAVE FOUND, LIKE THE BUSINESS WORLD, WE HAVE BATTLES WITHIN OUR OWN CHILD ADVOCACY COMMUNITY. AND LIKE BUSINESS BATTLES, THEY HAVE TO DO WITH POWER, NOT MONEY OR STRATEGY.. AS CHILD ADVOCATES WE NEED TO TAKE OUR CALL FOR THE COLLABORATION OF OTHERS SERIOUSLY OURSELVES.

OUR ORGANIZING TARGET IS REGIONAL. WE ARE ORGANIZING BY REGIONS. EIGHT REGIONS WERE DEVELOPED IN OUR FACT FINDING AND VISITING PHASE LAST YEAR. EACH OF THESE REGIONS HAS A LEADER AND IS NOW DEFINING AND DEVELOPING PROJECTS. THE TASK FORCE IS THEIR VOICE FOR CHILDREN IN THE STATE. WE PROVIDE STAFF SUPPORT TO EACH REGION AND WE REQUIRE A BROAD BASED MEMBERSHIP INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES FROM CIVIC GROUPS, BUSINESS, RELIGIOUS, LABOR, MEDIA, GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL SERVICE COMMUNITIES.

2. WE HAVE ALTERNATIVES TO SUGGEST. WE PROMOTE MODELS THAT WORK. WE KNOW WHAT WORKS. WE PROVIDE INFORMATION TO OTHERS ABOUT PROGRAMS THAT WORK FOR CHILDREN AND WE SHARE THOSE RESULTS.

LEE SCHORR'S WORK, WITHIN OUR REACH, HAS DOCUMENTED WHAT WORKS. I HIGHLY RECOMMEND HER BOOK. WHAT WORKS ARE PROGRAMS THAT HAVE:

FIVE CHARACTERISTICS. THEY ARE:

- COMPREHENSIVE AND UNRIGID;
- FAMILY ORIENTED AND SEE THE FAMILY IN COMMUNITY;
- EMPOWERING TO WORKERS WITH SKILL BUILDING AND TIME, TIME TO CREATE TRUST BETWEEN WORKER AND FAMILY;
- FLEXIBLE AND DRIVEN BY NEEDS OF FAMILY RATHER THAN NEEDS OF FUNDING;
- IN THERE FOR THE LONG HAUL, NOT CRISIS ORIENTED.

I THINK IT IS OUR JOB TO INTERPRET AND GIVE MEANING TO THESE CHARACTERISTICS. THEY ARE RADICALLY DIFFERENT FROM THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MANY OF OUR PUBLIC PROGRAMS.

SO, WE ARE NOT WAITING FOR OTHERS OR FOR GOVERNMENT TO ACT. WE KNOW THAT A LOT OF THINGS CAN BE DEALT WITH SUCCESSFULLY ON THE LOCAL LEVEL.

EXAMPLES INCLUDE COMMUNITY PROJECTS TO REDUCE DROP-OUT RATES, PROGRAMS THAT ARE COMMUNITY BASED THAT SEEK TO REDUCE TEEN UNEMPLOYMENT, AND PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE SMALL CASH LOANS TO WORKING FAMILIES, (MONEY TO FIX CARBURETOR TO GET TO WORK).

3. WE ARE USING A MEMBERSHIP CONCEPT. THERE IS NO FEE TO JOIN. EACH MEMBER BECOMES A REGIONAL ADVISOR BY SIGNING ON, AND AS AN ADVISOR HAVE INFORMATION AND GET LISTENED TO AND HAVE A STATE VOICE... OUR GOAL IS TO BUILD THE BIGGEST CONSTITUENCY WE CAN, EVEN THOUGH WE KNOW IT IS COMMITMENT, NOT NUMBERS, THAT MATTER. WE WANT TO BE LIKE THE NRA AND SAY TO OUR LEGISLATORS AND OTHER DECISION MAKERS, "WE REPRESENT THE WEST VIRGINIA TASK FORCE ON CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES AND WE HAVE THE LARGEST PUBLIC INTEREST CPMSTOTIEMCU OM TJE STATE."

4. WE ARE DOING FACT-FINDING AND INFORMATION SHARING. WE RAISE THE LEVEL OF DEBATE WHEN WE SHARE THE FACTS ABOUT THE STATUS OF CHILDREN BY MEASURES OF CHILD WELL BEING. THE CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND HAS TAUGHT US THIS. WE ARE GOING TO BE PUBLISHING MEASURES OF

WELL BEING FOR CHILDREN. WE WILL TEACH ALL OUR ADVISORS HOW TO USE THE INFORMATION TO IMPROVE CHILDREN'S LIVES ON BOTH THE LOCAL, REGIONAL, STATE AND NATIONAL LEVEL. WE ALSO PLAN TO PROVIDE SMALL SEED GRANTS TO OUR REGIONS FOR COMMUNITY PROJECTS BASED ON COMMUNITY NEED.

SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, I VISITED DAVID RICHART OF KENTUCKY YOUTH ADVOCATES. IN OUR MEETING, HE SAID, "OUR BUSINESS AS ADVOCATES, OUR PRODUCT, IS IDEAS. WE ARE ABOUT SELLING THOSE IDEAS IN ORDER TO SHAPE PUBLIC OPINION AND PUBLIC POLICY. WE ARE ABOUT THE PRINCIPLE OF DIMINISHING ASTONISHMENT." THROUGH OUR DEBATE, WE WILL MAKE IT SEEM MODERATE TO SPEND 85 BILLION A YEAR FOR CHILDREN.

I WAS IN THE WEST VIRGINIA EASTERN PANHANDLE SEVERAL WEEKS AGO MEETING WITH ONE OF OUR REGIONAL ADVISORY GROUPS. THIS REGION CONSISTS OF EIGHT COUNTIES AND IT IS SPARSELY POPULATED. THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF SCHOOL CHILDREN PER SQUARE MILE IN MOST OF THIS REGION IS ABOUT 5... TO GO FROM ONE END OF THIS REGION TO ANOTHER TAKES ABOUT FOUR HOURS BY CAR. THE GROUP TALKED ABOUT THE LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF RURAL NEEDS BY MANY IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS. A WOMAN IN THE GROUP TOLD THE STORY OF A CHARLESTON CITY WOMAN WHO HAD COME INTO THE AREA, AND THE WOMAN FROM THE CHARLESTON CITY (WE DON'T REALLY HAVE CITIES IN WEST VIRGINIA, BUT PEOPLE IN RURAL AREAS BELIEVE CHARLESTON IS A CITY) SAID TO THE RURAL WOMAN, "TELL ME, WHAT DOES YOUR LOCAL "Y" DO FOR CHILDREN?"

THERE ARE MANY ORGANIZING AND PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS FOR US AS WE BUILD A CONSTITUENCY FOR CHILDREN IN RURAL WEST VIRGINIA.

I WILL MENTION A FEW.

FIRST OF COURSE, THERE IS NO "Y" IN RURAL AREAS. THERE ARE SMALL CHURCHES. EACH CHURCH HAS AN ANSWERING MACHINE AND A PASTOR. THERE ARE SMALL BUSINESSES. THEY ARE UNABLE TO PROVIDE FLEX TIME AND JOB SHARING BECAUSE THE BUSINESS HAS FEW EMPLOYEES AND FEW RESOURCES.

THERE ARE LONG DISTANCES TO TRAVEL TO NETWORK IN THE REGION. THE ISOLATION MAY WORK IN OUR FAVOR, HOWEVER. THIS RURAL REGION MENTIONED ABOVE GETS TOGETHER EVERY SIX WEEKS BECAUSE THEY WANT TO SUPPORT EACH OTHER AND SHARE INFORMATION.

THE PER PUPIL EXPENDITURE IS MISLEADING, IMPLYING A RICHNESS THAT DOES NOT EXIST. THE PER PUPIL EXPENDITURE REFLECTS TRANSPORTATION, AND WE KNOW THIS COST IS HIGHER IN RURAL AREAS.

ATTRACTING AND RETAINING CARE PROVIDERS IS A CHALLENGE. THE RUGGED, ISOLATED RURAL AREA HAS ALWAYS HAD A PROBLEM WITH PHYSICIAN SHORTAGES, NURSE PRACTITIONERS, NURSE MID-WIVES AND SOCIAL WORKERS.

A FEW OTHER SPECIAL CHALLENGES TO ORGANIZING ARE:

1. THE NEEDS OF EACH OF OUR REGIONS WILL BE DIFFERENT. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE WILL BE A GREATER CONCERN ABOUT POVERTY IN SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA THAN IN ONE OF OUR FASTEST GROWING COUNTIES, PUTNAM.
2. IT WILL BE A SPECIAL CHALLENGE TO ORGANIZE REGIONALLY FOR PROBLEM SOLVING. REGIONAL PROBLEM SOLVING REQUIRES A REGIONAL IDENTITY. WE MAY DEVELOP COUNTY TASK FORCES WITHIN EACH REGION.
3. THE NEEDS OF EACH MEMBER OF OUR COALITION IS DIFFERENT. WE NEED TO STRUCTURE OUR SERVICES TO MEET THESE NEEDS. FOR EXAMPLE, BUSINESS INTERESTS INCLUDE INFORMATION ON WHAT BUSINESSES ARE DOING FOR CHILDREN. SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS ARE INTERESTED IN POLICY TRENDS, AND THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY WANTS SPECIFIC GUIDANCE ON HOW IT CAN IMPROVE THE LIVES OF CHILDREN.

IN PREPARING THIS PRESENTATION, I ASKED THE QUESTION, "WHY DON'T WE JUST DO WHAT IS RIGHT FOR CHILDREN AND SPEND THE MONEY FOR WHAT

WE KNOW WORKS?" WE KNOW THAT SIXTY-SEVEN PERCENT OF AMERICAN'S SAY THEY WOULD VOTE FOR A CANDIDATE WHO WOULD SUPPORT INCREASED SPENDING FOR CHILDREN EVEN IF IT MEANT A TAX INCREASE. WE KNOW WHAT THE RISK FACTORS ARE. EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

- POVERTY,
- HEALTH PROBLEMS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD,
- ABUSE AND NEGLECT.

WE KNOW WHAT THE PROGRAMS ARE THAT WILL HELP OVERCOME THESE RISKS. EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

- HEADSTART AND
- WIC AND
- FAMILY PLANNING.

SOME OF THE REASONS WE DO NOT DO WHAT IS RIGHT AND JUST INCLUDE:

- SPECIAL INTERESTS,
- GREED,
- POWER,
- STUPIDITY, LACK OF KNOWLEDGE.

NOW THE REASONS THAT WE HAVE NOT DONE WHAT IS RIGHT ARE TURNING IN OUR FAVOR. THERE IS A GROWING RECOGNITION THAT IT IS IN ALL OF OUR SELF INTERESTS TO DO SOMETHING. WE RECOGNIZE THAT CHILDREN MUST BE PROTECTED FROM POVERTY AND OTHER ABUSERS BECAUSE WHEN THEY ARE NOT, WE WILL ONE DAY HAVE TO BE PROTECTED FROM THEM.

THE TIME HAS COME WHEN DOING THE RIGHT THING IS THE SAME AS SAVING OUR NATIONAL SKINS. SOMEONE SAID "THE HAPPIEST MOMENT IN A POLITICIANS LIFE IS WHEN CONSCIENCE AND CONVENIENCE MERGE." THAT IS HAPPENING. WE HAVE A MUCH LARGER CONSENSUS AROUND WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE. THIS GROWING CONSENSUS GIVES US HOPE.

I WISH YOU WELL IN YOUR WORK AND HOPE YOU FIND THE CONFERENCE INSPIRING.

THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME.

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